

SPONSA REGIS

DECEMBER, 1961

THIS DAY CHRIST IS BORN,
THIS DAY THE SAVIOR
HAS APPEARED:
THIS DAY ANGELS ARE
SINGING ON EARTH,
ARCHANGELS
ARE REJOICING;
THIS DAY THE JUST
ARE GLAD AND SAY:
GLORY TO GOD
IN THE HIGHEST, ALLELUIA.

ANTIPHON, II VESPERS CHRISTMAS DAY

SPONSA REGIS

A SPIRITUAL REVIEW FOR SISTERS

DECEMBER 1961

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Maranatha: Come, Lord Jesus

SISTER M. PAULA, O.S.F.

The liturgy of Advent tells us we are to prepare for more than just a commemoration of the birth of the historical Christ. It reminds us that he is born to each of us in a very special way, that he comes to dwell in our very beings to make us like unto himself. But the third Mass on Christmas Day urges us to prepare for the Second Coming of Christ. It is this third aspect of Advent preparation that is most neglected.

The first Christians thought the Second Coming was imminent. In the early years of the Church this "Advent" period was used as a time of preparation for the Second Coming of Christ. We read in Saint Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, for example, a condemnation of those Christians who were avoiding work on the plea that the *parousia* was at hand. In an encyclical letter from Jerusalem to all the Churches, discovered in 1895, it was set down with astonishing certainty that the Lord would return before the year 150.¹ This strain still finds an echo in today's liturgy. Saint Paul's epistle as noted above appears in the Ember Saturday Mass of Advent. It begins and ends with a reminder of the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel for the first Sunday of Advent tells us exactly how Christ will come when the last liturgical year is swallowed up in eternity. "And then they will see the Son of Man coming upon a cloud with great power and majesty" (Luke 21:27).

The breviary does not want the historical birth of Christ to completely overshadow the eschatological approach. The Matins Advent hymn in its final stanza exemplifies it thus:

That, when the judgment-seat on high
Shall fix the sinner's doom,
And to the just a glad voice cry,
Come to your destined home;

¹ Jacques Hervieux. *The New Testament Apocrypha*. (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1960), p. 173.

Safe from the black and yawning lake
Of restless, endless pain,
We may the face of God partake,
The bliss of heaven attain.²

The second antiphon for Vespers during Advent carries the same refrain:

Behold the Lord shall come and with him all his
saints, and in that day there shall be great light.³

There are parts of the Advent office that can be taken in a twofold sense: the commemoration of the birth of the infant King and his glorious coming as a triumphant King. For example, the invitatory for the first and second week of Advent has the verse:

Come, let us adore the Lord, the King who is to come.⁴

The antiphon for None:

Let us live justly and piously in this world, looking
for the blessed hope and coming of the Lord, Alleluia.⁵

The psalm tone for Vespers of Christmas Day is that of the *Miserere*. It might seem strange that the end of time is emphasized in the beginning of the Church year. In the beginning of any undertaking it is always wise to look toward the goal.

As the centuries slipped by the eventuality seemed to become more and more remote, and stress was put on Christ's birth at Bethlehem. But today some people are of the opinion that the world is in such a sorry state that momentarily God will allow us to blow ourselves into nothingness. Rev. John Kreuzer, on the other hand, holds that we are only at the beginning. He reasons that the earth has been in existence for more than a million years and that man has inhabited it for more than half a million years. And, "it is a fact that Christ, the God-man, arrived only a little less than two thousand years ago. An odd love story it would be if the courtship took twenty years and the marriage lasted only two days. God can certainly devise a better plot than that."⁶ Pierre

² Pius Parsch. *The Church's Year of Grace I*. (Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1957), p. 15.

³ *A Short Breviary for Religious and the Laity*, ed. William G. Heidt, O.S.B. (Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1954), p. 274.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

⁶ John Kreuzer, C.S.S.R. "When Will the World End?" *The Liguorian*. 49:4 (April, 1961), p. 11.

Teilhard de Chardin reminds us, however, reiterating the gospel, that it is vain to speculate as to the hour — “But we have to expect it.”⁷ The Jews waited 4000 years but never lost that eager anticipation. Are we doing our part to keep this desire alive today?

You may well ask, What does one do to keep the Second Coming before the mind's eye? Every Jewish maiden hoped that she would be chosen to be the bearer of the Saviour. We too can — and should — be Christ bearers. We must let Christ attract us so the material world does not distract us. We can become identified with Christ by being what we profess to be — religious. Eliminate all the less than childish actions from our lives; forget self and live with our brethren in harmony. We should increase our interest in preparation for the *parousia*. In simple translation *parousia* means “presence,” and refers “to the greatest of all presences, namely our Lord's at the Last Day, the awesome presence which is anticipated in his mystery at Mass: ‘as often as you do this, you announce the death of the Lord, *until He comes*’ (I Cor. 11:26).”⁸ His coming to us at every Holy Communion can be an anticipation of his coming to gather us up, soul and body, to himself when the Mystical Body is complete.

What implications does the fact of the Second Coming bring to bear on us toward the end of the twentieth century? First, we must realize that it is a promise still to be fulfilled. It is not a myth. The introit for the Mass of Ascension Thursday makes it quite clear. “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up to heaven? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven shall come in the same way as you have seen him going up to heaven” (Acts 1:11).

Secondly, we have but to look to the Creed to find that his second coming will not be as a babe but as a judge. The prayer in the breviary for Christmas Eve asks God that as we receive Christ as our Redeemer so we may without fear behold him as our judge. “But since the liturgy functions chiefly for immediate spiritual benefit, it makes the *parousia* a motive for moral reformation. Daily we shall be living in the light of Christ's Second

⁷ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. *The Divine Milieu*. (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 134.

⁸ H. A. Reinhold. “Parousia and Etimasia.” *Jubilee* 7:8 (December, 1959), p. 15.

Coming.”⁹ On what will we be judged? On one count only—love. Those who love will be on his right; those who refuse to love, on his left. Christ will look at us as if our soul is the only one in existence. He will not ask us what offices we have held in the community. But the questions will be put: “Did you love your rule? Did you fulfill every assignment out of love?” The lamps that the wise virgins carry might well be lamps of love. How is the oil supplied? Do you love your community to the point that you do everything to promote its unity? Do you love your sisters so that you never create a cross for any of them? And finally: Do you “love one another as I have loved you”? (John 15:12). Our present answer to this last question will decide how we are looking forward to his Second Coming.

Hope, not fear should be the keynote. Hope makes us happy in this world because it grants us a share in God. “We know that, when he appears, we shall be like to him, for we shall see him just as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him makes himself holy, just as he also is holy” (I John 3:2-3). We find this theme in the epistle for the first Mass of Christmas: “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious coming of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (Titus 2:13). “The ‘great God’ is Jesus, not the Father. In Greek one article joins ‘great God’ inseparably with Savior.”¹⁰ For us hope is strengthened with our knowledge that he is coming not only as our judge but also as our spouse. There should well up within us an eager anticipation of the event, for we will be united to our bridegroom and behold him with our bodily eyes for all eternity. To share the sufferings of the bridegroom is the ambition and desire of every bride, to share his joys is also her daily yearning. The long separation in life from the infinite source of life only intensifies our yearning to be united with him. He loves us now in proportion that we allow him. After his great coming we cannot put any more obstacles in the way of his love.

Mary brought him to us at his first coming. Now we must beg her to bring us to him at this Second Coming.

⁹ P. Parsch, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁰ *New Testament Reading Guide*. Fourteen booklets by members of the Catholic Biblical Association. Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1960. No. 10: Saint Paul's Pastoral Epistles, by Rev. Robert T. Siebeneck, C.P.P.S. p. 44.

The Testing of Ideals

THOMAS MERTON

In order to be perfect we must have concrete, rational ideals and make efforts to live up to them. There must be some general norms and standards which apply to all, which serve as universal "rules" to be followed by each one in the living of his own life. Such rules must never be underestimated or neglected. If we here devote a few pages to reflection on these broad, general norms which are the basis of Christian spiritual doctrine, it is not because we are trying to map out a foolproof method for becoming holy. We are simply recalling to mind the Church's fundamental teaching on the way of Christian perfection.

The way of Christian perfection begins with a personal summons, addressed to the individual Christian by Christ the Lord, through the Holy Spirit. This summons is a call, a "vocation." Every Christian in one way or other receives this vocation from Christ — the call to follow him. Sometimes we imagine that vocation is the prerogative of priests and of religious. It is true that they receive a special call to perfection. They dedicate themselves to the quest for Christian perfection by the use of certain definite means. Yet every Christian is called to follow Christ, to imitate Christ as perfectly as the circumstances of his life permit, and thereby to become a saint.

Our reply to this call of Christ does not consist in saying many prayers, making many novenas, lighting vigil lights before the statues of the saints, or eating fish on Friday. It does not merely consist in attendance at Mass, or the performance of certain acts of self-denial. All these things may be very good when seen in the full context of the Christian life. Taken out of this context they may be devoid of religious significance, mere empty gestures.

Our response to Christ means taking up our cross, and this in turn means shouldering our responsibility to seek and to do, in all things, the will of the Father. This was, in fact, the whole

essence of Christ's own earthly life, and of his death and resurrection. All was done in obedience to the Father (Hebrews 10:5-8; Luke 2:49; Matthew 26:42; John 5:30, etc.). So too Christ says to every Christian: "The kingdom of heaven will not give entrance to every man who calls me Master, Master; only to the man who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

THE WILL OF THE FATHER

Hence our whole life should be centered on the will of the Father. This will is expressed clearly and obviously in the law given to us by God—summed up in the Ten Commandments and epitomized most perfectly in the one great commandment to love God with all our heart and mind and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourself.

But now that Christ has laid down his life and risen from the dead, to take possession of us by his Spirit, the Spirit himself, dwelling in us, should be to us a law. This interior law, the "new law" which is purely a law of love, is summed up in the word "sonship." "Those who follow the leading of God's Spirit are all God's sons; the Spirit you have now received is not, as of old, a Spirit of slavery to govern you by fear. It is a Spirit of adoption which makes us cry out Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15).

The Holy Spirit does not abolish the Old Law, the *exterior* command: he makes that same law *interior* to ourselves, so that doing God's will becomes now no longer a work of fear but a work of spontaneous love.

Hence the Holy Spirit does not teach us to act contrary to the familiar dictates of law. On the contrary he leads us to the most perfect observance of law, to the loving fulfillment of all our duties, in the family, in our work, in our chosen way of life, in our social relationships, in civic life, in our prayer and in the intimate conversation with God in the depths of our souls.

The Holy Spirit teaches us not only to actively carry out the will of God as signified to us by precept, but also to lovingly accept the will of God in providential events beyond our own control.

In a word, the whole Christian life consists in seeking the will of God by loving faith and carrying out that blessed will by faithful love.

Perfection is therefore a question of *fidelity and love* — fidelity to duty first of all, then love of God's will in all its manifestations. Love implies *preference*, and preference demands sacrifice. In practice, then, the preference of God's will means setting aside and sacrificing our own will. The more a Christian renounces his own will to do the will of God in loving submission and carefree abandonment, the more he will be united to Christ in the Spirit of divine sonship, the more truly will he show himself a son of the heavenly Father, and the closer he will come to Christian perfection.

Since all Christians are called to be saints, and since religious in particular have undertaken, by their profession, to devote their whole life to the quest for union with Christ in the perfection of love, it is not out of place to return constantly to these familiar ideas and to meditate on them over and over again. This is especially true since we all have a tendency to forget our responsibilities and our true vocation, and to slacken our efforts on the ground that somehow the quest for perfection is not quite practical. Our ideals are necessarily tested, and often we lose confidence under the pressure of trial and temptation.

This generally comes to pass in quite a normal way when we become disillusioned with the unreal notions of perfection which are common among beginners. To say that we must renew our novitiate fervor does not necessarily mean that we ought to renew novitiate illusions. It is a much more difficult and sobering thing to go on seeking perfection when we see clearly that it means forging ahead blindly through darkness and dryness, through confusion and inevitable disorder, through every kind of silly and ridiculous obstacle that falls across our path by our own fault or due to the blindness of men. But we can never do this unless we cling firmly to our desire to love God above all, and to seek his will no matter what happens — even if all our ideas of the spiritual life have to be turned inside out while we do it.

Let us also frankly face another unpleasant fact: we must be tested not only in our personal ideals, but in those religious ideals which we hold in common with others. It is quite normal for men and women who have dedicated their lives to God by vows, in religious communities, to face severe testing in regard to the

communities to which they belong. They sometimes have to confront the bitter truth that not everything is ideal in the religious family they have chosen. Some are not even able to face this directly: they can never fully admit it to themselves. But they cannot escape the anguish which wrings their heart. Perhaps they do not know the source of the anguish, but it is there. Others are able to admit to themselves that they see what they see: but it becomes a scandal to them. They rebel against the situation, they condemn their community, and they even try to find the means to break away from it. They do not realize that they have now come close to the real meaning of their vocation; they are now in a position to make the sacrifice that is demanded of mature religious men and women: the acceptance of imperfection and of deficiency in themselves, in others, and in their most cherished institutions. They are now required to face the truth of these imperfections, in order to see that the community does not exist merely to do everything for them, to create a haven of peace and security for them, to sanctify them passively. On the contrary, it is now time for them to give to their community from their own heart's blood: to sacrifice themselves for others who may no longer seem to be very worthy. It takes great heroism to devote one's life to others in a situation which is frustrating and unsatisfactory, and in which one's sacrifice may even be, in large measure, wasted. But here again, faith in God is necessary. He sees our sacrifice, and he will make it fruitful, even though in our own eyes there is nothing apparent but futility and frustration. And when we accept this grace, our eyes are opened to see the real, unsuspected good in others, and to be truly grateful for our vocation.

REALISM IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

John Tauler says in one of his sermons that when God is seeking our soul he acts like the woman in the Gospel parable, who lost her groat and turned the whole house upside down until she had found it. This "upsetting" of our inner life is essential to spiritual growth, because without it we remain comfortably at rest in more or less illusory ideas of what spiritual perfection really is. In the doctrine of Saint John of the Cross this is described as the "dark night" of passive purification that empties

us of our too human concepts of God and of divine things, and leads us into the desert where we are nourished not by bread alone but by the means which can come only directly from him. Modern theologians have argued at some length about the necessity of passive mystical purification for fully mature Christian sanctity. We can here disregard the arguments on either side, since it is enough to say that true sanctity means the full expression of the cross of Christ in our lives, and this cross means the death of what is familiar and normal to us, the death of our everyday self, in order that we may live on a new level. And yet, paradoxically, on this new level we recover our old, ordinary self. It is our familiar self who dies and rises in Christ. The "new man" is totally transformed, and yet he remains the *same person*. He is spiritualized; indeed, the fathers would say he is "divinized" in Christ.

This should warn us that it is useless to cherish "ideals" which, as we imagine, will help us to escape from a self with which we are dissatisfied or disgusted. The way of perfection is not a way of escape. We can only become saints by facing ourselves, by assuming full responsibility for our lives just as they are, with all their handicaps and limitations, and submitting ourselves to the purifying and transforming action of the Savior.

It is really tragic to observe the frustration and the ruin which overtake well-meaning but misguided novices who cannot grasp this elementary fact. For such, there is practically no question of a serious religious vocation. And yet they seem to be the ones who, in some way, are most hungry for perfection. The earnestness and intensity with which they seek to break out of the prison which they have become to themselves is so pathetic that it cannot help arousing compassion in all who try to help them. Sometimes directors and novice masters make the mistake of encouraging the illusory idealism which is the source of all the trouble, instead of trying to bring these poor sufferers to face reality.

There is no good in a morbid self-hatred which sometimes passes for humility. There is no hope in a spiritual ideal tainted with a Manichaeian hatred of the body and of material things. An angelism which is nothing but a refinement of infantile self-love cannot lead either to spiritual liberty or to contemplation.

And yet at the same time we must struggle to control our passions, we must seek to pacify our spirit in deep humility and abnegation, we must be able to say "no" firmly and definitely to our inordinate desires and we must mortify even some of our legitimate cravings for the sake of discipline.

The job of giving ourselves to God and renouncing the world is deeply serious, admitting of no compromise. It is not enough to meditate on a way of perfection that includes sacrifice, prayer, and renunciation of the world. We have to actually fast, pray, deny ourselves, and become interior men if we are ever going to hear the voice of God within us. It is not enough simply to make all perfection consist in active works, and to say that the observances and the duties imposed on us by obedience are by themselves sufficient to transform our whole lives in Christ. The man who simply "works for" God exteriorly will lack that interior love for him which is necessary for true perfection. Love seeks not only to serve him but to know him, to commune with him in prayer, to abandon itself to him in contemplation.

The Offering Up of Our Lord

BARBARA DENT

When Our Lady agreed to the incarnation, she agreed also to all its consequences. How clearly she understood these we do not know, but certainly she knew what was prophesied of the Messiah—dark and terrible things, as well as glorious things.

Her “fiat” embraced all these just as simply and wholeheartedly as her arms were to embrace her Son after his birth. The one and the other went together, and it was not Mary’s way to question the will of God, or to make bargains with him over what it was to cost her. She accepted the motherhood of the Messiah, and in one uninterrupted gesture, like a spiritual parabola of the will, she offered him back to his Father, with all that that might entail for both him and her.

No one has ever lived in such close union with Jesus as Mary, and no one has ever offered him so completely to the Father as she did. She fashioned him within her own body, bore him, and brought him up for one purpose, that God’s will might be perfectly accomplished through both him and her, and this necessarily entailed offering him, without any reservation whatever, to the action and the designs of God. Her unique position as his mother coupled with the unique perfection of her offering of both him and herself, makes her the co-redemptress with him of the human race. His work of redemption was dependent upon her consent, and we cannot evade this fact.

The spiritual offering made by Mary at the incarnation was followed by the legal and formal offering at the time of the presentation in the temple.

Again, we do not know exactly how much of the future she foresaw, though we can be sure that the prophecy of Simeon pierced her to her depths. “. . . This is the light which shall give revelation to the Gentiles, this is the glory of thy people Israel. . . . Behold, this child is destined to bring about the fall of many and the rise of many in Israel; to be a sign which men will refuse

to acknowledge; and so the thoughts of many hearts shall be made manifest; as for thy own soul, it shall have a sword to pierce it" (Lk. 2:32, 34-35).

These are ominous words, even though they do prophesy an exalted destiny for the Child. What mother, hearing them (and Mary was a normal mother in every way, except that her capacity for love was so much greater and purer than ours), would not shrink away, clutching her child to her breast, and longing only for an obscure safety and the security of knowing one was lost among the masses of the ordinary, whom history passes over in silence and neither doom nor glory ever touch?

Yet we can be certain that no matter how violently Mary's natural feelings recoiled from her future, she gave her whole soul and her whole will, in the very same second, to whatever God had in store for her. She was the mother of the Son who in his worst agony could yet say, "Nevertheless, not my will be done, but thine," and she was at all times a worthy mother of such a Son.

It must constantly be remembered that Mary consented to be the mother of the Messiah in order to give him to mankind so that he might accomplish God's work. This necessarily entailed offering him completely to God at the same time as giving him to mankind, for God's work in the world can be accomplished only through those who are abandoned in every way to his action: through those who have offered themselves unreservedly to him. One cannot give oneself to humanity in any way that will result in true and lasting good, without first giving oneself to God.

There was no trace of possessiveness in Our Lady. She knew, as most of us forget, that all that she had really belonged to God and she was merely trustee for it. Above all, this Child, conceived by an overshadowing of the Most High, was God's and then humanity's, before he was hers.

This truth is borne out by the strange happenings at the wedding feast of Cana.

When Mary, always so sensitively aware of the needs of others, notices that the supply of wine has failed, she simply turns to her Son, making the statement, "They have no wine."

His reply seems odd. The usual translation is worded, "Woman, what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come." Obviously there is some kind of understanding between them that involves much deeper issues than the words suggest. It seems as if he is refusing the request implicit in her simple statement, but, in effect, he cannot have done so, for her only reaction to his enigmatic words is to say to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

The only sensible interpretation of this sequence of events is that Jesus knew it was not yet the time appointed by his Father for him to commence his public ministry and start off openly on the road leading to Calvary and the shedding of his blood for us. His mother is included in this projected offering of himself, for he asks her what it has to do with either of them that the wine has failed. Why should both of them hasten his hour by intervening with a miracle at this humble country feast?

However, it seems that Mary had already made up her mind, and it also seems that Our Lord deliberately began his redemptive mission before he had intended, because she desired it. It is also worth noting that it is through her as intermediary that he begins it. She it is who tells the servants to obey his instructions, and he gives these instructions only after she has spoken.

Into this narrative then, we can read a deep meaning. Here is Our Lady once more offering up her Son, deliberately hastening the hour of his Passion, and bringing nearer her own martyrdom of the heart, and he consenting to do her will rather than his own. There can be no doubting that they are deeply one in this matter of the work of our redemption. She wills to offer him completely, and herself with him, knowing what is entailed for them both, and when she intimates her readiness, he takes the first step that is to lead to his passion and to her vigil by the cross.

"And I will establish a feud between thee and the woman, between thy offspring and hers; she is to crush thy head, while thou dost lie in ambush at her heels" (Gen. 3:15). Our Lady is so eager to place her foot upon the serpent's head, so that we all may be saved from it, that she gladly invites the anguish of both her Son and herself. We are reminded of his own longing

to be immolated. "There is a baptism I must needs be baptised with, and how impatient am I for its accomplishment!" (Lk. 12:50).

There are very few who will love souls enough to pray for the hastening of their own immolation.

II

Something similar to Mary's offering up of Jesus takes place, or ought to take place, in the life of every Christian.

By baptism we are incorporated into Christ, but that does not mean we realize then, or later, the implications of such a cataclysmic interior change. When sanctifying grace is infused into our souls, the life of God himself becomes part of us (unless we cast it away by committing deliberate, serious sin) and we ourselves become God's children. This is a strange and frightening existence for a creature originally cast off by God, and its responsibilities are mighty ones.

Living the Christian life with all our powers fully extended means consciously nurturing this God-life within, actively striving, all day and every day, to grow more and more indistinguishably merged with Christ, till it is possible to say with Saint Paul, "I live — now not I, but Christ lives in me."

That is the aim of being and living as a Christian. Continually the ego — expressed through self love and self will — must decrease, that the living Christ may increase. Obviously, there are parallels here with the incarnation. In a spiritual but very real way, Our Lord desires to become incarnate in each of us. He longs for our "fiat" that he may carry on his work in the world through us. He wills us to be his hands succouring the ill and needy, his feet hastening to do the will of him who sent us, his lips praising God and speaking words of comfort and love, his heart consenting to be wounded by and inflamed with charity, his mind ever alert to discover and interpret correctly his Father's wishes, his will bent to take the divine will as bow to take the arrow.

Through baptism, indeed, we have undertaken an obligation to be used by Our Lord in this way, and Mary should be our pattern and our inspiration.

Jesus said, "Without me you can do nothing," and the whole spiritual life is concerned with the joyous humiliation of plumbing

the truth of these words to their self-annihilating depths. Often it means trying and trying in our own puny strength, till a thousand defeats and disappointments force us to our knees: to the capitulation of pleading desperately for grace.

Before the soul can be united with Jesus it must first enter deeply into its own nothingness. The bragging, impetuous, generous, fervent Peter had to experience himself as the traitor who denied his most beloved friend to save his own skin, and weeping desolately, to acknowledge it, before he could be truly emptied of self and filled with Christ. He had to know from searing experience that no matter how loudly he boasted, his own weakness would always defeat him as long as he tried to conquer in his own strength. Only in the complete collapse of self confidence can true safety be found. It is when one is spiritually bankrupt, and knows it, that Our Lord's hour comes.

It is then that he says, "My strength is made perfect in your weakness," and it is then that one experiences the exquisite joy of glorying in one's infirmities in the midst of humiliation. God's grace is apportioned according to our need. He who most keenly feels his own need, pleads most piteously for help.

"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. . . . Lord, that I may see. . . Have mercy on me, O Lord, as thou art ever rich in mercy. . . . Save us, O Lord, or we perish. . . ."

This is to fall in love with the Lady Poverty as Saint Francis did, to want to stay a little child as Saint Therese did, to desire with Saint John of the Cross that one's soul should become "naught else but an altar whereon God is adored in praise and love, and God alone is upon it" (*Ascent*, Bk. I, Ch. 5), to say with Saint Paul, and for the first time really to mean it, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me do?"

It is when this state of interior poverty is reached that the soul realizes that now, when its one desire is to give all to God, it has nothing to give. All the sacrifices it has made, all its efforts and strivings, all its sufferings, are only a peck of dust. Most of them were contaminated with self love and self seeking, and those of them that were motivated by pure love were the work of God's grace. Every morsel of good it has and has done, the

soul sees has come from God. God was its origin. God's grace made its accomplishment possible.

"Why callest thou me good? Only God is good." At last the soul is able to say this sincerely to the ego within itself — that ego always so eager to begin its cockerel crowing, to laud its own victories, to claim honour and praise for itself.

And so there is nothing at all to give God, except one's naked will, and the one true treasure of one's being — Christ within. The purpose of the incarnation is at last understood, together with the necessity for the redemption.

"All alike have sinned, all alike are unworthy of God's praise. And justification comes to us as a free gift from his grace, through our redemption in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:23-24). "Enemies of God, we were reconciled to him through his Son's death; reconciled to him, we are surer than ever of finding salvation in his Son's life. And, what is more, we can boast of God's protection; always through Our Lord Jesus Christ, since it is through him that we have attained our reconciliation" (Romans 5:10-11). In its poverty, the soul can now offer Christ to God, and this offering is the only fitting one that any man can make.

Mary's life was a continual offering up of our Lord, and of herself united with him. Our lives have to become like hers. Jesus meant what he said when he told us, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but through me." Going to God by the way of Jesus means offering him up to God and oneself with him because one knows one is God's creature, and possesses nothing of one's own right.

However, it was the whole Christ that Mary offered, and it is the whole Christ that we must offer. This means the crucified Christ. And we cannot rightly and sincerely offer up the crucified Christ until we ourselves have become one with him in his passion. Often enough we have been warned that a fully Christian life means partaking of the passion and death of our Lord, and often enough we have evaded applying this truth to ourselves.

Saint Paul says, "The Spirit himself thus assures our spirit, that we are children of God; and if we are his children, then we are his heirs too; heirs of God, sharing the inheritance of Christ; only we must share his sufferings, if we are to share his glory"

(Romans 8:16-17). He reminds us of the consequences of our baptism. "You know well enough that we who were taken up into Christ by baptism have been taken up, all of us, into his death. In our baptism, we have been buried with him, died like him, so that, just as Christ was raised up by his Father's power from the dead, we too might live and move in a new kind of existence. We have to be closely fitted into the pattern of his resurrection, as we have been into the pattern of his death; we have to be sure of this, that our former nature has been crucified with him, and the living power of our guilt annihilated, so that we are the slaves of guilt no longer" (Romans 6:3-6).

However, though baptism initially washes us clean, and precipitates us into the life of sanctifying grace as sons of God, we are not thereby made safe for the rest of our lives. Always we must carry about within us "the dying state of Jesus" as a perpetual sacrifice to God. Our mystical death must remain part of his death for as long as we live. Pride is never eliminated until we draw our last breath, and the spiritual life must necessarily remain a ceaseless battle against those elements in ourselves which incite us away from God and prevent our attaining full union with Christ.

This self mortification is part of that war against the sin of the world and the prince of darkness instituted by Christ in his passion and death. By entering into it with a will and in the strength of his grace, we enter at the same time into his sufferings for us. We merge our own sufferings with his. We take up our cross and bear it beside him, determined never to leave him again.

It amounts to this: we have to learn to will the crucifixion, the immolation, of our Lord, just as Mary did, and our own immolation in union with him, just as she did hers. Baptism initiates the process. Our daily struggles, defeats, aspirations, prayers, sufferings and mortifications carry it through to completion.

God wills that each one of us should so fully realize and enter into his own interior weakness as to acknowledge with our whole hearts, and not just our lips, that we are completely dependent upon his grace. He has promised us, "Ask, and you

shall receive." Yet only the beggar asks with all his powers, and it is spiritual beggary that gives real intensity to our prayers.

"My strength is made perfect in your weakness," he has told us. The spiritual life is a pyramid of paradoxes, and in it only the truly weak are the truly strong. Saint Thérèse explored fully the possibilities of this truth, and applied them logically in her own spiritual life, producing a body of teaching that thousands have found to be an inspiration and a practical guide.

When in this state, the soul need never be distressed at aridity and impotence—all it has to do is offer Jesus within itself to God. What better prayer could there be? What nobler way of praising and worshipping the Father? What more acceptable oblation?

Like Mary we can offer him at every moment of our lives, and we can offer him upon the cross of our own dying self love and self will. It is here that it is his joy to be. He who told us to take up our cross daily and follow him, will never absent himself from our interior crucifixions, and wherever our hands are nailed to the cross, they rest in his.

III

Saint Paul says, "We carry about continually in our bodies the dying state of Jesus, so that the living power of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies too. Always we, alive as we are, are being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the living power of Jesus may be manifested in this mortal nature of ours" (2 Cor. 4:10-11).

In the sacrifice of the Mass the Church provides us with the perfect means of offering to God this "dying state of Jesus" so that "the living power of Jesus" may be made manifest in us and through our way of living.

We pray that "we may have fellowship in the Godhead of him who deigned to share our manhood" and we tell God that we are offering to him "out of the gifts he has bestowed upon us, a sacrifice that is pure, holy, unblemished, the sacred bread of everlasting life, and the cup of eternal salvation."

Each member of the Mystical Body offering the Mass in union with Christ becomes part of the one "pure, holy and unblemished" sacrifice that man can present to God. Only Christ

is acceptable to God. Upon him only does the Father gaze in unutterable love, while he pronounces the words, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." By baptism we also become the sons of God and the inheritors of heaven, but only in so far as we remain united with the only begotten Son. Of ourselves we are nothing. In Christ alone is virtue. In Christ alone is salvation. In Christ alone is that perfect holiness which is acceptable to God. Everything must be "*per ipsum, et cum ipso, et in ipso.*" Unless it is "through him, and with him, and in him" it cannot be pleasing to God.

Consequently, the sacrifice of the Mass is essentially the offering up of Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb, and of ourselves in union with him. The more complete this offering is in both aspects the nearer to sanctity is the offerer. It is the saint alone who is capable of offering the Mass in perfect dispositions, for his soul is fully united with our Lord, and his will in perfect conformity with God's will.

However, the more frequently we offer Mass and unite ourselves sacramentally with Jesus in the blessed eucharist, the closer we must come to the perfect dispositions of the saint. The emptier we know ourselves to be of goodness (unless he fills us with himself) the more ardently and humbly will we offer Jesus through the Mass, and ourselves with him, that God's grace may flow back upon us in a tidal wave to quench our painful longing for his presence within.

For those who seek continually to be offering Jesus to the Father, the Mass is the one truly adequate prayer, the blessed eucharist the one necessary, daily food of the soul, and the tabernacle the one unfailingly satisfying resting place in prayer. With the Psalmist they cry, "Lord of hosts, how I love thy dwelling-place! For the courts of the Lord's house, my soul faints with longing. . . . Willingly would I give a thousand of my days for one spent in thy courts!" (Ps. 83).

The Word, by becoming flesh, dying for us, and then ascending into heaven, established once more a direct and open route between man and God, earth and heaven. Before that, the way was sealed off by the Iron Curtain of our ancestral guilt; but the Word, by being born of a woman, became our way and dissolved

forever, in his expiatory death upon the cross, the barrier between us and eternal bliss in the bosom of the Father.

Commerce between earth and heaven depends upon him, and him only. He opened the way, he keeps the way open — he *is* the way. Continually we must be offering him up to God, that we too may flow upwards in the prayer of adoration and supplication that leads to heaven. To make this possible he remains truly in and with and part of us. As branches to his vine we grow nearer to God, and bear the fruits of true holiness, every time we unite ourselves with the offering up of the sacred Body and Blood, placing ourselves on the paten and in the chalice in such sincerity that an inward transformation takes place in our souls, and shows forth in our lives.

By the power and healing of God's grace we may then hope to be able to say before we die, "I live — now not I, but Christ lives in me."

The Apostolate and Obedience

CYRIL F. MEYER, C.M.

The modern active religious leads a life filled with duties that are exciting and challenging and demand the utmost of her physical, psychical and religious resources. As the scope of her apostolate broadens and new vistas open before her, she plunges enthusiastically into the work of giving herself entirely to the Master's cause.

One problem which confronts her at every turn is the time available for carrying on the work of the apostolate. If she is engaged in teaching she is haunted by the discouraging conclusion of a survey made several years ago, that to do merely an adequate job she needs twelve more hours of time per week. Sisters caring for the sick, Sisters working with Catholic charities, have all discovered that often there is too much to do and too little time in which to do it.

The pressure of time and the insistent demands of the apostolate build up pressures of their own which may have unhappy overtones in her religious life. Often they are intensified by the fact that there are still other pressures which may exert a very discouraging influence upon her. One of these is the frustration or disillusionment which may arise from her imperfect adjustment to the realities of her vow of obedience.

When at the end of her novitiate training the young novice pronounces her vow of obedience, she does so gladly, enthusiastically, and with a sense of great privilege. This is the day for which she has been waiting. This is the hour when she accepts the solemn engagement of submitting her will to the will of her superior. As she kneels there much like a young bride pronouncing her marriage vows, she assumes that she knows rather clearly what lies before her. It is too bad that the Church does not give her an admonition similar to that found in the marriage instruction about a mixture of joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, failures and successes, pleasures and pains to be expected in her religious life. She takes a vow of obedience that she may become

joyful, successful and have her hopes fulfilled. But if she lives long enough, like the young bride, she will learn that the religious life has its sorrows along with its joys, its disappointments together with its hopes, its failures and its successes, its pains and its pleasures.

Some of the difficult aspects of her religious life will flow from the day to day relationship with her superior. The average Sister today comes from a home where it was taken for granted that she might discuss with her parents the pros and cons of their practical decisions. It would be the rare child today who, forbidden by her parents to attend a high school prom, would bow her head and quietly and peacefully say: "Mother and dad know best. I am not concerned with the reasons they have for denying my request."

This natural bent to explore the reasons behind parental decisions is developed by the educational experience of the average Sister before she enters religious life — and afterwards also, if her community sends her for further formal studies. In these studies she is trained to analyze, to pick things apart, to look for the reasons which make them intelligible. As she matures she is encouraged to think for herself. She is advised not to accept everything that is printed in a textbook but to ask herself, "What justification has the author for making this statement? How is this statement connected with other things he has already said?"

After a time it becomes almost second nature for her to question, to analyze, to look for reasons. It is true that as a novice she was taught to be submissive to the judgments of her superiors without questioning; but it is surprising how quickly some of us revert to our earlier ways once the atmosphere of the novitiate is supplanted by the more realistic, less carefully controlled experience of life on a mission. In these new circumstances, there are aspects of obedience which may strike her clearly for the first time, and disturb her to the point of damaging her apostolic work.

If the Sister is a mature adult with a well-developed sense of responsibility, she is bound to chafe under the attentions of a superior who insists that no decision be made unless each matter is brought to her attention first. In the business world the Sister perhaps made many practical and important decisions. Now even

within the limited area of her own work she is not permitted to think for herself. To be treated like a child is an affront to one's personal dignity as a human being, and often inflicts permanent damage on one's personality.

As a mature person trained to think clearly, logically, and cogently, the Sister may become disgusted in dealing with a superior who constantly appeals to a higher wisdom to justify her decisions and who is a stickler for the observance of age-old rituals which govern the etiquette of superiors. This etiquette was originally based upon the wonderful spiritual truth that the superior is the representative of God; but for a superior who is not aware of the implications of that truth, the etiquette can easily become a planned effort to impress the subject with the exalted position of the superior. Because of the social pressures of her religious life, the subject may observe punctiliously every prescription of that etiquette, but inwardly she is not only not impressed by the empty show of power but finds in it a continuous aggravation.

She may now begin to question the validity of that attitude which would identify the relation between superior and subject with the relation between mother and child. The custom of calling the superior "Reverend Mother," the frequent admonitions to superiors that they are the "mothers" of their communities, have crystallized the attitude that the obedience a religious owes to his superior is much the same as that which a child owes to his parents.¹

The spiritual basis of this concept is certainly laudable in itself; but there are two important differences. (1) The obedience of a child is designed to protect him from his own instinctive impulses until such a time as he is able to command himself reasonably. At that time he no longer owes implicit obedience to his parents in everything. The religious, however, never reaches a point where he does not owe obedience to his superiors. (2) In the parent-child relationship there are fundamental differences between the mature adult, charged with the responsibilities of parenthood, and his physical offspring, who needs parental help in order to mature physiologically, mentally and spiritually. In the superior-

¹ See the article, "Reflections on Obedience," by Father Karl Rahner, S.J. in *Cross Currents* (Vol. 10, no. 4, Fall 1960), where some of these ideas are treated in greater detail.

subject relationship it is assumed that both parties are adults capable of responsible behaviour. (If in a given case the facts should be different, this is only *per accidens* and not *per se*.) It can reasonably be presumed that in the parent-child relationship the parent is more intelligent, more foresighted and morally mature than the child. In the superior-subject relationship this is not necessarily so, and often enough in real life it is not so. The office of superior presents a challenge to its occupant; and sometimes less gifted persons who have received the office respond to its challenge in unfortunate ways.

It is true that good order and the attainment of the objectives of a community preclude a subject going off on a tangent and blazing a path of her own. Common sense indicates at once that her suggestions, her fresh, bright ideas, should be subject to the judgment of the superior for approval, emendation or rejection. No mature subject would resent this. But sometimes the prevailing attitude of a religious house is that there is a special heresy involved if a subject does not accept the way things are done as the sure determination of the will of God, and is bold enough to express the opinion that things might well be done differently.

This is not to suggest that the subject would be practicing obedience if she refused to follow a direction or practical decision of her superior. But just as a subject must be a listener to a superior if she is to practice obedience, so a superior must be a listener to the commands of God and of the Church, to the prescriptions of the constitutions and rules of her community, to the dictates of common sense, to the promptings of grace, if she is truly to represent the will of God. The intelligent subject is aware that the orders of her superior may proceed not from divine guidance but from dead traditionalism, from human limitations, from a short-sighted desire for uniformity, from a lack of imagination and from many other factors. Unfortunately the fact that a superior has the right to issue a command is no guarantee that it is the right command to give.

Obviously these difficulties in one's day to day relationships with her superior would vanish if some superiors were different. But it is unrealistic to expect that overnight the formation and attitudes of some superiors will change radically. Fortunately, there

are many evidences of change for the better. The open and frank discussions of both major and local superiors carried on in the meetings of the Sister Formation Conference are bearing much fruit. We may not expect, however, that the day will ever arrive when the superior-subject relationship will not create some difficulties for both of them.

The subject must not expect, then, that her problems will be solved by a marked change in certain types of superiors. Attitudes that have been entrenched for years will change only slowly. In the meantime the subject must keep herself at maximum effectiveness in her apostolate. To pay too much attention to the difficulties which have been outlined will produce inner clashes between what reason tells her should be so and what actually is so. Faced with the impossibility of changing her actual situation, faced with the necessity of external conformity regardless of the rebellion inside, she is open to a sense of frustration and to an overpowering feeling of helplessness which might easily degenerate into a virulent form of cynicism.

At this stage she would do well to review what she did when she freely pronounced a vow of obedience and publicly served notice that she was prepared to lead a life of obedience. In doing this she announced that she was committing herself to a way of life according to the evangelical counsels. How these counsels might be carried out has been determined historically by a gradual development of the concept of the religious life.

As far as she is concerned, the way she should imitate Christ is determined by the community to which she belongs. Her community acquired existence as a moral body when its constitutions were approved by the Church as one practical expression of a pattern of life modeled after the life of Christ. As long as her community exists it is still subject to the jurisdiction of the Church, which may suppress it, support it, institute changes in it, assign to it a special mission.

This larger view of what she did when she vowed obedience may easily escape her consciousness. When the Church gave existence to her community, the Church gave to those charged with directing its activities the right to command subjects. The limits of this right are the boundaries of the authority given to them.

Hence the subject in vowing obedience explicitly or implicitly accepted the obligation of carrying out the just commands of authority. In this act of acceptance she shares in some mysterious way in the mission of the Church to be a witness to Christ. She and the Church are linked together to see that the scriptures are fulfilled. This is the way that the subject has elected to enter into her glory.

It would be easier if, when she vowed obedience, she could peer into a crystal globe and see revealed there each practical decision of her legitimate superiors which will affect her life. But much of the merit of her act derives from the fact that it is an act of faith. "Not knowing what is before her," she nonetheless freely subordinates herself to something higher than herself, the imitation of Christ. If the light of faith which burned so brightly when she vowed obedience continues to shine with clear intensity as she grows older in the religious life, she will understand that in accepting the unpleasant consequences of her free act she is walking in the footsteps of Christ, who was "obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8).

She must strive, however, to do more than merely accept the cross as something inevitable. To do this is indeed to take a step in the right direction. But if she would experience some of the spiritual satisfaction of perfect obedience her faith will have to be bright enough and strong enough to transform the natural ugliness of the cross into something attractive, something to be embraced gladly and enthusiastically, because in some mysterious way (which faith knows but does not understand) the cross is the means of directing her life to God.

It has always seemed to me that the difficulty of the average religious in accepting the unforeseen consequences of a vow of obedience springs from the fact that the light of faith has become somewhat dim. She is painfully conscious of human chicanery, of emotional bias, of the pressures of expediency on Provincials and Mothers General. She so easily sees the "foot of the superior" trampling her, as she supposes, into the ground; but oh! if faith would only let her see the "finger of God." This is the difficult transition to make: from the "*pedes superioris*" to the "*digitus Dei*."

Only faith can make this transition possible. Only faith can make it sure and painless.

If, therefore, we are to keep ourselves fit for a maximum effort in the apostolate, we must keep the light of faith burning brightly in our hearts. By ourselves we will neither remove nor solve the problems arising from day to day relationships with our superiors. The strength to ignore them, the power to transform them into stepping stones to spiritual perfection, will come from a deep faith. We may panic when it seems that in taking a vow of obedience we have committed ourselves to the loss of our personalities in losing our freedom, but faith will give meaning to the words of Christ: "He that shall lose his life for my sake, shall save it" (Mark 9:24).

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IKON

Within the broken ochre of the Wood,
Amber bleeds its fire in the tongued light.
The carved Crosses burn at their angle,
Crowning the shielded head of the Child
Like embers fastened in the malled gold
Against its iron rim. The Virgin's breast
Is darkly traced with ichor. In the dark
Umbrage of the eyes, another fire seems:
Burning in clouded light — a veined umber
Of broken earth and flesh, the marked cast
Of bone, thorn and blood shadowed in the fall
And rise of light scaling toward the dark
Where vigil and image consume Time's flame.

WILLIAM J. REDDING

ST. ANSELM'S PRIORY

In stalls below the altar
whose tapestry window is
lit with the colors of wheat
and wine, monks hunch at their prayer
and hang their chants upon the
incensed air, then rising turn
to gain and pass (with the joys
of sure tenderness) this
Benedictine kiss of peace.

JOHN LOGAN

THE BEE TREE

From lilacs
where the flaming drake was home
wild bees
swarmed to my unsound flesh
hived under my heart
they keep the flowers
as honey in my guts
but the forest burns at the tree
Christ rain on me
tomorrow

SUZANNE GROSS

ON A FIFTEENTH CENTURY FLEMISH ANGEL

The toe sticking out from under the hem
Of that angel's blue skirt
Shows, along with the finger raised
In no-nonsense admonishment,
That you are dealing here
With a down-to-earth angel,
An angel whose wings belong, organic
As a bird's: not like those Greco
Angels, sour-faced and grim with doubt.
The face of this particular red-haired
Angel, with blue wings and ruddy cheeks,
Holding a mace he'd use to crack
Your noggin, tingles from the chill
Of Northern skies; yet those cheeks
Are luminous with the long light
Of stars. His flesh is warmed
By blood that never need be drained.

DAVID RAY

Book Reviews

SCHOLASTICISM. Personalities and Problems of Medieval Philosophy. By Josef Pieper. Translated by Richard and Clara Winston. Pantheon Books, New York, 1960. Pp. 192. Cloth, \$3.00.

Josef Pieper, professor of philosophy at the University of Münster, is at present perhaps the best known German writer on the philosophy of Saint Thomas, as most of his books are fortunately also appearing in English translation, the latest one, *Hinführung zu Thomas von Aquin*, being promised for the near future. *Scholasticism* is an excellent and concise study of the movement of philosophical thought and its interactions with religious faith from Boethius to William of Ockham. It is solidly grounded on the researches of De Wulf, Grabmann, Mandonnet, Gilson, and Van Steenberghen, who brilliantly scotched the once widely accepted but ignorant commonplace that "scholasticism" was nothing but tiresome hairsplitting or a futile attempt to prove dogmas of faith by reason. No honest scholar today would dare follow the example of a once popular writer in his "story" of philosophy who failed even to

mention Saint Augustine, and who leaped from Aristotle to Francis Bacon with the comment that the power of the Church through Thomas Aquinas secured the transmogrification of Aristotle into a medieval theologian. One may be thankful that those days are past. Where De Wulf once emphasized the unity of medieval thought, Gilson later discerned a rich and even bewildering diversity of philosophical speculation.

Pieper calls attention to the implications of the fact that the great *Summa* of Saint Thomas was left unfinished by him even though it was meant to be only a textbook for beginners, and he suggests that the "ultimate" Thomas is to be found rather in his *Quaestiones Disputatae*, that is, "Questions examined in the course of debate." Followers of Saint Thomas today cannot be content to preach to the converted but must enter into discussion with their "other" contemporaries. To this end Professor Pieper remarks that the "natural reason" meant by Saint Thomas "is not primarily the dialectic adroitness to vanquish another in debate, but

rather the strength to 'listen' to everything one encounters."

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SEEKING GOD. By Bruno Scott James. Harper and Brothers, New York, 1960. Pp. 128. Cloth, \$2.50.

The pocket-size volume, *Seeking God*, by Father Bruno S. James begins with the blunt statement of fact: "Nothing muddles like muddled thinking except perhaps not thinking at all."

The book is no muddle. The thesis of the author is clear and exact: "Holiness is wholeness and consists simply in loving God with one's whole heart." And therefore "In so far as we fall short of loving God with our whole hearts we fall short of being whole persons."

The content consists of practical advice to those who have come to realize that mediocrity in God's service is unsatisfactory fulfillment. The twelve unpretentious little chapters deal with real fundamentals: Our Need for God, Our Way to God, The Will of God, Body and Soul. The author speaks of them as "rather disjointed compositions." Only the last few chapters warrant that qualification, however. Because the book is "still for beginners," a supplement gives a list of books which, summarized, can be described in Saint Benedict's final words of the Rule: "Those who are desirous of advancing with rapid strides to perfection have the divinely inspired books... and the Catholic Fathers." This bears out the fact that Father

Bruno James does no muddled thinking about perfection.

Seeking God is a handy desk volume for a quick return to the equilibrium of real values when one is dizzied by the whirl of life in this century. It is an effective soul-tranquilizer and balancer because it is so sanely God-centered.

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IN THE SPIRIT OF WONDER; a Christmas anthology for our age. Edited by M. L. Shradý. Pantheon Books, New York, 1961. Pp. xi, 147. Cloth, \$4.50.

Christmas is a season when publishers succumb to the temptation to put out a special book, a special anthology, a specially illustrated edition, in hopes of being able to satisfy the universal question, What shall we get him (or her) for Christmas? In the present instance, we can be happy that they did succumb to that temptation, for this is a collection of Christmas stories and poetry that is worth having.

This is not a children's book; it is not filled with marvelous illustrations; it has no sentimental contents or emotional pull. It is a book for adults, and Catholic adults, and all of its contents go to illustrate in an adult way the title, *In the Spirit of Wonder*. Here we have Belloc and Mann, Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh, Boris Pasternak and Saint John of the Cross, Phyllis McGinley and Ronald Knox (and many others), telling tales or writing verse which is meaningful,

thoughtful, evocative, contemplative. As John Courtney Murray says so well in the Introduction, "Exquisite care has gone into the selection. And the gathering has been guided always by the spirit of wonder resident in the editor herself." If you want to give (or receive) a really mature and thought-provoking book for reading during the Christmas season, *In the Spirit of Wonder* can be recommended in a spirit of whole-hearted approbation.

Ronald Roloff, O.S.B.
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FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF: An Introductory Course in Apologetics. By Edward V. Stanford, O.S.A. The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1960. Pp. 242. Paper, \$1.95.

This book can be a fitting and necessary foundation for an adequate theology for the layman. As Archbishop O'Boyle writes in the Foreword, "To be able to give reasons for the faith that is in us we must have an intellectual grasp of the teachings of our faith." Although written primarily for senior high school students, it should be useful to parish discussion groups and to the general reading public.

The author, the Reverend Edward V. Stanford, follows the logical and traditional order: the relation between faith and reason, the existence of God, the nature and operations of God, the nature of man, the relation between man and God in religion, the existence of both natural and supernatural religion, the Gospels and their claims, the

divinity of Christ, the Church. There follow a chapter on such questions as evolution, predestination, and the problem of evil, and a chapter on appreciating the faith. Each of the seventeen chapters is followed by review questions and suggestions for reading.

Father Stanford thinks that presenting fragments of the apologetic argument in general religion textbooks may be more than ineffectual; it may be harmful. For this reason he has written a textbook, meant to cover one semester of time, to present the apologetic argument, briefly but completely, in language young people can understand.

The attractive format and abundant examples should prove valuable to those who choose to teach a course in traditional apologetics.

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SAINT PAUL OF THE CROSS. By Charles Almeras. Translated by M. Angeline Bouchard. Hanover House, Garden City, New York, 1960. Pp. 286. Cloth, \$3.95.

Paul Danei was born in the village of Ovada, Italy, in 1694. The Danei family was poor, though rich in noble ancestors about whom they knew very little. They often changed residence because the father was constantly in financial difficulties. Paul had a very meager education, but one of his schoolmasters declared that the child, not yet twelve, knew as much as he did. He was precocious in virtue, penance, and prayer. Dedicated from childhood to the crucified Saviour, he made the

Sacred Passion the constant subject of his meditations and disciplined his body with almost incredible mortification. Yearning for martyrdom, he wished to join a Venetian expedition against the Turks; then realizing this was not God's will for him, he determined to enlist in a nobler army and devote himself to work for the Church and for souls. After ordination he formed a confraternity which gradually developed into the religious Congregation of the Passion. Drawing its inspiration from love for the Cross and for Christ crucified, the order has spread throughout the world with remarkable spiritual success.

Prefaced by Henri Daniel-Rops and introduced by the Abbé André Combes, this biography of the saint, ascetic, and mystic, Paul of the Cross, depicts one of the most remarkable spiritual figures of the eighteenth century. The astonishing severity of his mortification and the extraordinary depths of his humility led Paul Danei to heights of mystical prayer, and his holiness attracted followers wherever he went. He knew trial and error, opposition, failure, and success, and Father Almeras has gone to the very core of the saint's spiritual life and doctrine. But though penetrating and scholarly (with notes and documentation at the end of the volume), this "definitive biography" makes slow, even tedious reading, for the style is unrelieved by literary grace. Here the fault may lie with the translator, but this is doubtful, though the use of the question as a stylistic device might have been eliminated to some extent. More-

over, while giving much *about* Paul of the Cross in analysis and interpretation, Father Almeras would have made his portrait more revealing had he allowed the saint to speak out more for himself and so deliver a fuller and more personal message.

Mother Louise Callan, R.S.C.J.
Maryville College
Saint Louis, Missouri

WHAT IS THE EUCHARIST? By Marie-Joseph Nicolas, O.P. Translated by R. F. Trevett. Hawthorn Books, New York, 1960. Pp. 125. Cloth, \$2.95.

This is volume fifty-two of the *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*. Its aim is to present and explain the reality made present in the rite of the Eucharist, center of Christian life and worship, containing the whole mystery of Christianity. The basic plan is thoroughly sound. There are three parts. Part one (The Church's Faith in the Eucharist) sets out the doctrine to be believed by all the faithful. It deals briefly with the teaching of Scripture and tradition. There is a rapid sketch of the development of this Eucharistic faith through the centuries. Without being a full study of a long, complex story, it is adequate enough to show a real continuity existing between the Eucharistic faith of the New Testament and early Church, and the theological formulations of that faith in later centuries, culminating in the dogmatic formulas of the Council of Trent. Faith cannot long be vitally alive in man without

impelling him to try to grasp and express it better and in a fuller synthesis, with the aid of reason and philosophical analysis. This marks the birth of theology.

Part two studies the classical theology of the Eucharist according to the way of thought and language of Saint Thomas, the "doctor of the Eucharist." It is, of necessity, very philosophical at times; the author is forced to borrow from the technical language of theology. This part is introduced by a fine discussion of what Abbot Vonier so aptly called "the key to the doctrine of the Eucharist." This essential fact is the sound grasp of the general idea of a sacrament and of the sacramental order. "The Incarnate Word remains present and active until the end of the world, through signs, through realities the senses can grasp. The Incarnation is continued in the sacramental order. The Eucharist is the pre-eminent and supreme instance of the sacramental presence In other words, in the Eucharist is found substantially and perfectly what it is the whole purpose of the sacramental order to signify and to make present—the Incarnate Word in his deifying action."

Part three (The Eucharistic Practice of the Church) reviews the more characteristic aspects and trends of the current Eucharistic devotion: cult of the Real Presence, participation of the faithful at Mass, frequent communion. A conclusion discusses the place of the Eucharist in the Christian system.

Written by a theologian for a wider circle of educated lay readers

and busy priests, this book displays good qualities; within the limits imposed by the series, it succeeds well.

Michael J. Marx, O.S.B.
College of Saint Benedict
Saint Joseph, Minnesota

A NUN WITH A GUN. By Eddie Doherty. The Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, 1960. Pp. 194. Cloth, \$3.50.

A provocative title, indeed: *A Nun With a Gun!* Even the indifferent becomes curious and winds up enjoying two or three hours (it can be read in that time) of Eddie Doherty's delightful and cautious unraveling of the life of a heroic woman. Sister Stanislaus was a Daughter of Charity and a hospital administrator who today would rank high among her peers. The author sensed the great dedication that was hers and used it as the core of his book. He moves his story along with a simplicity that is powerful. The magnanimity of the woman bursts forth whether she is caring for the least or begging for alms from the greatest. Always the woman—religious, refined, professional, with her goals set, her obstacles conquered, living, loving, laughing.

Women administrators in every field should take time out to read this book. It is sparkling with feminine affection and charity. It is a study of woman's intuition. It has plenty of inspiration even for less great souls. It will help to loosen the bonds that tend to hold one to this time and this place and force the reader to take a peep into the importance of study-

ing the future in time and the necessity of knowing all about the Future which has no Time. We are grateful to Mr. Doherty.

Sister Mary Lourdes, S.S.J.
Nazareth College
Rochester, New York

SEVEN BOOKS OF WISDOM. By Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm. Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee, 1960. Pp. 159. Cloth, \$3.75.

The Sapiential Books are not merely handy sources for liturgical texts. These seven works develop a theme which is not dealt with so formally in any other section of the Old Testament: the problem of retribution. In analyzing each book in the light of the most recent biblical scholarship, Fr. Murphy traces this theme expertly. His treatment of Proverbs introduces us to the Wisdom movement. Then he provides a basic division of the main types of Psalms with key illustrations; this is all that one could expect from a work of this kind. In Job we are shown the necessity of the "experience of God" to understand suffering, even imperfectly. Canticles is studied in terms of a nuptial love song (and perhaps Fr. Murphy understresses the symbolic use to which both Jews and Christians put it). The pessimism of Ecclesiastes is explained in terms of its being only a partial answer to the problem of retribution. In Sirach, we see the added dimension of biography used to exemplify divine Providence, and the final book, Wisdom, is shown to include the dimension of history. In his conclusion, the author speculates on a theme which he seemed

to have overlooked: the significance of Proverbs 8, Sirach 24, and Wisdom 7. This serves as an apt finale to an excellent guide to the Sapiential Books.

Martin Hopkins, O.P.
Saint Peter Martyr Priory
Winona, Minnesota

MEET THE BIBLE. By John J. Castelot, S.S. Helicon Press, Baltimore, 1960. Pp. 140. Cloth, \$2.95. Do not be misled by the unpretentious title of this little volume. Written in popular style—its chapters appeared originally as a series in a number of diocesan weeklies—and, therefore, uncluttered with discussions of knotty scientific problems, *Meet the Bible* deftly introduces its readers to some of the most recent scholarly developments in Scriptural interpretation. Basing his procedure on the principle that "the literature of any people is both conditioned by, and is a reflection of, the gradual unfolding of the history of that people," Father Castelot tells the story of the composition of the various books of the Old Testament by placing them in their proper chronological setting within the framework of the history of God's Chosen People. The book should, therefore, be read with a copy of the Bible at hand so that the respective portion can be studied as it is introduced.

Its simple, straightforward style makes this, the first in a proposed trilogy, a book which could profitably serve high school and college students and members of study groups as an up-to-date introduction to the Old Testament. The list

of readings, simple outline maps, and chapter quizzes will prove an added advantage for such use.

Sister Jean Marie, S.S.N.D.
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THE WORD OF GOD; Approaches to the Mystery of the Sacred Scriptures. By Georges Auzou. Translated by Josefa Thorton. Herder, St. Louis, 1960. Pp. vi, 255. Cloth, \$4.75.

THE WORD OF LIFE; Essays on the Bible. With a Foreward by E. J. Kissane. The Newman Press, Westminster Md. 1960. Pp. viii, 123 Paper, \$1.75.

Though the titles of these two biblical popularizations are nearly alike the work is not. Father Auzou's book follows the lines of a number of popular introductions to the Bible, discussing the origin and gradual formation of the Bible; the notion of biblical inspiration; interpretation through the ages of the Church; how the text has come down to us; the Hebrew mind; the peculiarities of the Hebrew language—all of this sprinkled with solid biblical theology and a fine ecumenical spirit. Though the translation is not the best, it is adequate and preserves something of the richness of the French original. Some parts of the book are top-quality, and none of it is useless or out of touch with the vast areas of biblical research of the present time. Perhaps there is a little more in the way of Hebrew semantics than some will care for, but this cannot be entirely avoided. One comes away from this book feeling

the warmth of the writer's love for Sacred Scripture and his very enlightened approach. This volume is to be followed by another which, we hope, will contain an index for both. Its omission would be a serious drawback; for good but unexpected ideas are found everywhere. The price seems outrageous.

The Word of Life is made up of a Foreward and twelve essays, all by Irish authors, and all having appeared at one time in *The Furrow*. The reviewer, who bears anything but a grudge against the Irish, cannot say that the essays are impressive. Irish biblical scholarship is to him an enigma. Aside from the work of the late Msgr. Kissane, very few valuable contributions have come forth from the "sod," and we wonder why. These essays are mediocre, and the individual bibliographies are at times a little pathetic—mostly the *Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* which, though having its bright spots, is generally about 20-30 years obsolete. The Robert-Tricot *Guide to the Bible* is not referred to in the new 1960 edition. The best essay is one by Father Jerome Kiely, a master of English literature, who writes on "The Bible as Literature." This is excellent, very objective, with a real sparkle of wit.

Though able to serve as a simple but incomplete introduction to the Bible (the Bible seems even less popular in Ireland than elsewhere), these essays throw but little lustre on Irish biblical scholarship.

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